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M'CRADY'S REVOLUTION IN SOUTH CAROLINA,
1780-83.*

GEN. MCCRADY has been before the public so long as the historian of South Carolina, and his work has been so widely reviewed, that hardly more is now called for than a few remarks upon his fourth and concluding volume. There has been a steady improvement in Gen. McCrady's work. The sketch of the early life of the colony lacked much of the ease of narrative, and the balance of the various phases of development, which give to the story of the Royal Government a subtle charm and, too, its chief importance. On entering upon the Revolution, in addition to the native zest of the historian for his work, the author is animated by the consciousness that his task is no less than to correct, in many essential respects, the well-nigh universally accepted account of the great war for independence. The retelling of this story involves the examination of a number of reputations, the shattering of some hoary formulas, and a revision of certain historic judgments.

The style of the *Revolution in South Carolina* is well suited to the subject—clear, simple, pure, deliberate. Every petty skirmish is described; yet through 735 pages the interest is sustained without weariness or monotony; and, moreover, this has been done in such a way as to make clear the relationship of these events as part of the whole American war. The account of the Revolution in South Carolina presents more difficulty than the history of the struggle in any other State. The threads of the narrative are numerous and widely separated; Mr. McCrady's greatest achievement as a stylist is his holding all these in perfect control and harmony.

*"The History of South Carolina in the Revolution, 1780-1783." By Edward McCrady, LL.D. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1902. See the *SEWANEE REVIEW* for April, 1899, and October, 1901, for reviews of the three preceding volumes of this work.

His eye and pen must, it seems, at times be simultaneously busy in all the opposite corners of the State. Yet he never leaves us to wonder where we left off, or to become confused by the complicated order of events. We feel that the author's whole attention is absorbed in spreading before us in faithful order all the events of rapid and tangled campaigns, and that he has had no conscious thought of style; consequently the happy result has been a piece of literature free from every trick or meretricious ornament, flowing smoothly and strongly on.

The narrative of the last three years of the Revolution makes more exacting demands upon the historian's judicial qualities than any previous volume of the series. To begin with, there is the whole vexed question of the attitude of the State toward the Revolution. Mr. McCrady meets this so frankly as to clear the atmosphere immediately and enable us to breathe more freely, now that the truth is told without passion and reservation regarding the Whigs and the Tories. There is such a contrast between this calm, heroic story, told with such quiet self-respect, with all its spots and all its honor, and the mutual boasts and recriminations in 1854 in which Massachusetts and South Carolina indulged, through Sumner on the one side and Keitt on the other. Now anger and boasting can alike slink away before the face of truth. Mr. McCrady's work goes to prove what has been said by one of the country's foremost historical scholars—that the more we learn of the Revolution the more plainly it appears that it was the work of a noble minority. Whole regiments of the regular British troops sent to subdue the patriots of South Carolina were raised, officers and men, from the Tories of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York. Sabine's "American Loyalists," we may say, is a work whose wider circulation would have helped us sooner to a juster view of our early national history.

In all the colonies there existed at the outbreak of the Revolution many reasons deterring considerable portions of the people from plunging the dagger of revolt into the breast of their mother country; and this was particularly true of

South Carolina. In this State there were two distinct bodies of population. They had never acted in harmony, and upon the outbreak of the war they did not depart from their precedent. But before the struggle was over, the unnatural alliance of foreign invasion and a cruel civil war had swept into its fearful vortex almost every man as a combatant and every woman and child as a sufferer. The two diverse sections of the State—coast country and back country—each had its own phase of the Revolution, and each was drawn into it from different causes. At the time of the Stamp Act there was gathered the nucleus of a radical party of opposition to British encroachment, with Christopher Gadsden at its head, seconded by Thomas Lynch and a few others of the gentry, whose ranks were composed mainly of mechanics and tradesmen. The bulk of the substantial classes, who joined thoroughly in constitutional opposition to the Stamp Act, looked with contempt upon this small radical party who, after the Stamp Act had been laid to rest, continued even to the extent of their lives their fervid professions of attachment to the liberties of America. But the events of the next ten years proved that Gadsden, with his "liberty tree boys," had discerned rightly the signs of the times; in 1775 he had the large majority of the low country gentry with him. It was this wealthy element, headed by a few radicals whose first indorsement had come from a lower class, that led the State into the Revolution. They staked all for an abstract idea, for the oppression that had fallen upon Massachusetts had left them untouched.

But there was a different element in the back country. It is estimated that at this time these unrepresented, neglected back countrymen comprised two-thirds of the population of the province. The low countrymen hardly were aware of their existence, as they had come unnoticed by the inland route from Pennsylvania, Virginia, and North Carolina. This settlement of the back country was very rapid, falling mostly, as Mr. McCrady points out, after the outbreak of the French and Indian war in 1754. These newcomers had received grants of rich land in the King's name. No

Stamp Act oppressed them; for they had no courts in which to use legal papers, a fact for which, though not justly, they blamed the low country legislature; the taxation and representation were subjects in the first of which they had little experience, and in the latter of which none. Accordingly, it was natural for these plain, rough men to stick to the King, who had so recently given them their homes, and stand aloof from what appeared to them as the quarrel of low country gentlemen too proud to think of them except when their services were needed. True, there were many among these who joined the standard of rebellion at the first alarm, but there remains no doubt that when the battle of Fort Moultrie was won the majority of the people of South Carolina were opposed to secession from England.

The British received such a sharp rebuff at Fort Moultrie, June 28, 1776, that for three years they gave up all attempts upon South Carolina. Then came the two sieges of Charleston—the first of which, under Prevost in 1779, failed; and the second of which, after fifty-three days' duration, gave Sir Henry Clinton the city, on the 12th of May, 1780. Here, we may say, ended the first phase of the Revolution in South Carolina. Keeping a number of the more influential under surveillance, Clinton paroled the great body of his captives, and extended the same terms to many of the militia of the State—to all, in fact, who were willing thus to terminate their career in the service of their country.

And now commenced the second phase of the Revolution in this State, during which the unpaid voluntary bands of her citizen soldiery long fought unaided by the Continental government, and in the latter part of which they and the Continental troops combined recovered the State from the enemy. Exulting in conquest, bands of the British invaded some of the quietest sections of the upcountry and wantonly scattered insult, desecration, and murder among a people who had never raised a finger against the King. Supplementing this, occurred the massacre of a number of disabled foes by the ruthless Tarleton. The back countrymen, who had not been moved by questions of abstract right in forums

leagues away from their simple theaters of action, now sprang to arms to avenge most real and bloody wrongs from the ungrateful King whom they had refused to desert. In addition to these outrages, the British, in violation of the paroles they had accepted from their prisoners, exiled thirty-nine of the most prominent citizens of the State to St. Augustine, denied to the common citizen the promised protection, and proclaimed all to be rebels beyond the pale of law who should refuse to take up arms against their State.

As the result of this arbitrary and oppressive course, the people of the back country rose in bands under their own leaders, Marion and Sumter, who gained from their enemies the immortal sobriquets respectively of the "Old Fox" and the "Game Cock." But it is just to these partisan leaders and to others who followed later to remember that most of them had joined the patriot army at the very beginning of the Revolution, and were now only returning to the struggle from a different standpoint. When there was not a Continental soldier in the State out of the hands of the British, says Mr. McGrady; when the Governor, leaving not a vestige of civil government, had fled for safety beyond the borders he was elected to protect—these brave volunteers, without commissions and without pay, began the struggle to redeem the State from the completely victorious foe. With comparative ease and by the accepted methods, the English had conquered an army and overthrown a government; but, like Napoleon in Spain and Maximilian in Mexico, they had now aroused a people. In more than one hundred battles, against the British regular, the red Indian, and the implacable Tory, these "partisan" bands, by fierce onslaught and slow attrition, by the capture of outposts, the destruction of baggage trains, and the cutting of communications, inflicted such loss upon the enemy that, though he was victorious in every engagement with the Continental armies sent against him under Gates and Greene, he was compelled, in order to save himself from complete destruction, to retreat with every soldier under his command behind the fortifications of Charleston.

It is at this point of the narrative that Mr. McCrady has done the greatest historical service and at which he is likely to be most strongly criticised. Our author shows that an altogether undue proportion of praise has been given to Gen. Greene for his part in the Revolution in the Southern department. His military fame has rested chiefly upon the fact that when, after the battle of Guilford Courthouse, Cornwallis withdrew to Wilmington, N. C., Greene boldly struck into South Carolina, on the supposition that Cornwallis could not afford to follow him into that State and so neglect his northward campaign, and that if the Earl should pursue the northward campaign, the Americans in South Carolina would be able to recover the State. But it comes out that this movement did not originate with Greene but with "Light-Horse Harry" Lee, the closest friend and most trusted adviser among his officers, and that on several occasions Greene was with difficulty deterred by Lee and Sumter from leaving South Carolina. He hankered for Virginia, where more brilliant achievements might await him. He talked of "glory" almost as much as Frederick the Great on his first campaign, and, like that general upon that occasion, committed some grievous strategic errors in the pursuit of it; but whether the parallel might have been sustained farther, the brevity of Greene's career as an independent commander renders it impossible to say. Greene appears, under Mr. McCrady's searching examination, rather more of a tactician than a strategist; for he always fought well after he got into battle, though he sometimes got into it inaptly, and did not always strike at the most opportune time or select with good judgment the position to be occupied or to be attacked. Thus it was in the summer of 1781. Shortly after Greene's defeat at Hobkirk's Hill, Sumter so effectually harassed the British in their rear that Lord Rawdon was obliged to retreat toward Charleston. When he had about half covered the distance toward that post of safety, an opportunity occurred for Greene to strike a retreating enemy with a superior force in the best of spirits. Sumter and others urged it. But Greene declined

to force an engagement, and so allowed the junction he knew Rawdon was attempting, and was compelled to fight the British later under circumstances unfavorable to himself. Instead, he led off a portion of his army to be repulsed before the strong fort at Ninety-Six, and returned with a weakened force to be driven from the field of Eutaw. He fought Eutaw well; but equally as good fighting four months earlier in the same region would have given him the victory, and would also have secured the fall of Ninety-Six, instead of his own profitless losses before its walls.

The Americans employed three sorts of troops during the Revolution: regulars, or Continentals; State militia; and irregular volunteers, or partisans. A degree of credit not generally acknowledged is due to these last. The conception entertained by the Continental Congress of an army was of a body of hired fighters, such as the history of Europe made them familiar with, like the regular army of Great Britain. Volunteer levies enlisted for several years, such as have become familiar to the present generation in the war of secession or in the recent war with Spain, were not the practice in the Revolution. The State troops were ordinarily militia called out for two months at a time or thereabouts. The partisan bands of Sumter, Marion, Pickens, and others of less note, differed from either of the above-named classes of troops, since they assembled simply at the request of their leaders and served as long as necessity demanded or the situation of their families, regarding provisions and protection, allowed. For these non-regular troops, the Continental officers affected the supercilious disdain which professional soldiers commonly display toward volunteers. Greene spoke of them as a riffraff out for plunder rather than patriotism, and toward their officers as well he conceived a deeply rooted dislike, carefully concealed, however, from them. Yet the number of British slain, wounded, and captured in South Carolina by these men much exceeded the losses inflicted by the Continental army. No American officers deserve higher credit for their character and exertions than the just and patient Pickens; the swift and bril-

liant Sumter, so furious in attack and so enduring in affliction; and the prudent, humane, and skillful Marion. Mr. McCrady's service is very great in setting before the world, partly from hitherto unused manuscripts of some of the participants, the part these men played in bringing the Revolution to a successful termination. For it was their incessant activity that kept one British army permanently in South Carolina, delayed another on its northward march, diverted much-needed reënforcements from New York, and, by thus disordering the plan of crushing Washington between Clinton and the advancing army of Cornwallis from the South, sent the latter to his fate at Yorktown.

The history of the Revolution in South Carolina has never before been adequately written. Mr. McCrady has done the work with a thorough knowledge of all the bewildering details and with a grasp of the movements in their entirety that completely elucidates the subject. He has described and correlated the one hundred and thirty-seven battles and skirmishes which occurred within the State, scattered over literally every county—something no other State can approximate.* After the perusal of Mr. McCrady's work we can realize as we could not before the justness of the words of Bancroft: "Left mainly to her own resources, it was through the depth of wretchedness that her sons were to bring her back to her place in the republic, after suffering more and daring more and achieving more than the men of any other State."

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*Recently the number of counties in South Carolina has been increased from thirty-six to forty-two. In one, or possibly two, of the smallest of these six new counties there was no battle.